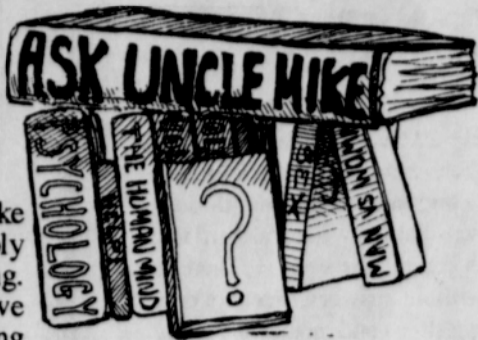


Dear Uncle Mike,
Care to comment on the Men's Movement?

Snicker-Chuckle, Tempe, Arizona



Dear Ms. Chuckle,

Being hopelessly out of the loop, Uncle Mike was unaware that men were moving. It's probably for the best. The neighbors were complaining. Maybe someday, after the wounds have healed, we can all get together for coffee and celebrate being human.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I'm thinking about seeing a counselor but I thought I'd write you first. I'm twenty-eight and have been married for two years. My husband is thirty-three. He is a good man and I love him but I'm worried he may be a sex addict. I enjoy sex myself but some nights I'd just rather not. If we don't have sex at least five times a week, my husband starts asking me if something's wrong. I don't think there's anything wrong with me. A friend gave me a book on sexual addiction and a lot of the things it said fit my husband. He likes adult videos, buys me fantasy underwear, and wants sex at inappropriate times. He doesn't think he has a problem and says he's just a very sexual person. He tries to be sensitive but that just makes it worse because I start thinking it's me who's being insensitive. It's not a huge problem yet but it could be. I'd be interested in any thoughts you have. Do you answer questions you don't use in your columns?

Name Withheld, Portland, Oregon

Dear Person,

Popular psychology is popular because of its ability to uncover rich seams of abnormality in people we thought were normal, ourselves included. Like the ferreting out of witches, it can become socially addictive. Uncle Mike has no idea which book your friend loaned you but he strongly suggests you return it. Given that most men think about sex several hundred times a day, he doubts that a thirty-three year old male who wants sex five times a week needs to be trussed up and shuffled off to a treatment center.

A good working definition of addiction is any behavior that a) damages yourself, b) damages your relationships with others, or c) interferes with your work. For a man your husband's age, frequent sex should pose no personal risk. Since you didn't mention it, Uncle Mike assumes he doesn't watch naughty movies on the job or embarrass himself by rubbing up against the coat rack in the presence of his coworkers. This brings us to relationships. Does your husband have any? Do they seem reasonably successful? Does he have friends with whom he's not having sex? Are any of them women? As regards your relationship, does his interest in you ever stray beyond the carnal? Does he seem to regard you as a human being? Are his advances such that you need to fend him off with a cattle prod?

If the fact that your husband enjoys watching videotapes of sexual acts between consenting actors indicates pathology, your book will surely have addressed the fact that, according to industry figures, some thirty percent of adult movies are rented by women; at least some of whom must not be sex addicts. That your husband buys you the sort of lingerie that qualifies as gift wrap is also hopelessly normal. Or at least within the bounds of a society that includes the Victoria's Secret catalogue. As for your husband wanting sex at 'inappropriate' times, Uncle Mike would need more information in order to comment; except to say that anything that frightens the horses is definitely a bad idea. Reduced to first principles, which is to say the state it was in before you read about what it might be, your problem boils down to your husband wanting sex more often than you. Forgive him. The poor slob is young and in love and, pitifully strung out on testosterone, probably thinks he arouses you as much as you arouse him. Have faith that your attitude and his bitter experience will change things. Hopefully, it will take the form of a compromise between two people who love and respect each other.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I have been friends with a woman for almost fifteen years. During that time, we have both been in various relationships, never single at the same time. We're not now either. I'm not involved but she has been married for several years. We've always been very attracted to each other but, aside from an occasional hug that lasted too long, we've never done anything about it. Neither of us are getting any younger and we're considering just going ahead and doing it. She has no intention of leaving her husband and neither of us want to hurt anyone. We just want to complete our friendship. I know it qualifies as cheating but as long as I'm not breaking up a marriage, I don't know if I think it's all that wrong. I could use your thoughts.

D.L., Seattle, Washington

Dear D.L.,

What you need is a brain. Repeat after Uncle Mike: there is no such thing as casual sex among thinking people, especially if one of them is a woman. You are about to have a former close friend. If either of you has a more developed sense of ethics than a weasel in heat, you'll do the other one a favor by reminding them of life's best piece of advice: doing unto others in ways you'd like to be done unto. Since you didn't mention any special understanding between your friend and her husband, Uncle Mike must assume that, regardless what you call it, he would see the two of you sleeping together as a violation of social contract. Of course, he'll never find out because your story is different than the thousands of movies built on similar plots. His ignorance, even if it should remain intact, will still not guarantee your bliss. Do this thing and you and your friend will never look at yourselves with the sort of pride and respect that make friendship possible. Unless, of course, you're not the kind of people who have pride and respect. Or the kind who believe that what goes round comes round.

Therapy Page

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